

Message Text

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60

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

EB-07 COME-00 FRB-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /073 W

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R 261621Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2156

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3556

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINR, PFOR, JA

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH OPPOSITION LEADER SEAGA

1. EVENING AUGUST 24 DURING SMALL DINNER AT MY HOME FOR TED HEAVNER, ARA/CAR, JLP LEADER EDWARD SEAGA MADE FOLLOWING POINTS TO US:

A. JLP PROSPECTS FOR UPCOMING ELECTION NOW QUITE GOOD. GRAVE ECONOMIC SITUATION COMBINED WITH BACKLASH FROM STATE OF EMERGENCY HAVE SIPHONED OFF CONSIDERABLE PNP SUPPORT.

B. IF HONEST ELECTION HELD NOW, JLP WOULD WIN 32 SEATS, AND PNP COULD COUNT ON ONLY 21. EVEN AFTER REDRAWING OF ELECTION DISTRICTS ANTICIPATED IN NOVEMBER, JLP CAN WIN.

C. GOJ ALLEGATIONS OF USG DESTABILIZATION WILL NOT HELP PNP IN ELECTION. MOST JAMAICANS LIKE AND ADMIRE U.S. AND ARE NOT TAKEN IN BY CHARGES OF USG PLOTS AGAINST JAMAICA.

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D. PNP ALSO HAVING INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES, WITH NON-ELECTED PARTY MEMBERS INCREASING THEIR AUTHORITY AT EXPENSE OF MORE MODERATE ELECTED OFFICIALS. ELECTED OFFICIALS CORDIALLY RESENT THIS SITUATION.

E. AVERAGE CITIZEN RESENTS AND IS WORRIED BY GROWING CUBAN PRESENCE.

F. CUBAN INTENTIONS INCLUDE SUBVERSION OF OTHER CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES. MOST VULNERABLE ARE ASSOCIATED STATES.

G. GOJ'S ECONOMIC SITUATION NOW TRULY CRITICAL. SHORT-FALL IN BOTH REVENUES AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE MEAN COUNTRY WILL BE VIRTUALLY BANKRUPT BY END OF SEPTEMBER. (SEAGA ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENT AUGUST 24, UNDERLINING JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND BLEAK PROSPECTS. STATEMENT NOTES J\$150 MILLION SHORTFALL IN TAX REVENUES, J\$90 MILLION DEFICIT IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE BY END SEPTEMBER.)

2. SEAGA WAS IN NOTICEABLY CONFIDENT MOOD. HE SPOKE OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS JAMAICA FACES AND HIS OWN DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES WITH GREAT WARMTH AND PERSUASIVENESS. ALSO PRESENT WAS FORMER JLP PRIME MINISTER SHEARER, WHO WAS CLEARLY IN FULL AGREEMENT AND GIVING SEAGA WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT.

3. AT ONE POINT, SEAGA RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT EXTENT TO WHICH U.S. CONGRESS IS INFORMED ON CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS. HE INDICATED INTEREST IN POSSIBLE TRIP TO WASHINGTON TO MEET WITH KEY CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS IN ORDER TO BRIEF THEM ON JAMAICAN SITUATION.

4. ALTHOUGH SEAGA SPECIFICALLY RAISED QUESTION OF WHETHER MANLEY WILL PERMIT A FAIR ELECTION, HE DID NOT DWELL ON THAT KEY ISSUE. HE EVIDENTLY DOES NOT NOW BELIEVE THAT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IS AN INSUPERABLE OBSTACLE TO SUCCESS AT THE POLLS, AND HE SEEMS TO THINK THAT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MANLEY WILL CONDUCT A REASONABLY HONEST ELECTION.

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5. COMMENT: WHILE SEAGA SEEMS TO BE ON A PERSONAL HIGH AND MAY BE OVER-OPTIMISTIC ABOUT JLP CHANCES, THERE ARE CONTINUING INDICATIONS THAT PNP IS LOSING GROUND AND DISSENSION WITHIN THE PARTY IS BECOMING PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT MANLEY WILL FIND JUSTIFICATION TO GO TO ALMOST ANY LENGTH TO STOP SEAGA, AND THAT THE ONLY CHECK ON THE USE OF HIS VIRTUALLY UNLIMITED POWER TO DO SO WOULD BE A WIDESPREAD PUBLIC

OUTCRY AGAINST ABUSE OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY REGU-
LATIONS. THIS APPEARS UNLIKELY AT PRESENT.
GERARD

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NNN

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